



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



1

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

TORAT

Parashat Bechukotai

HAMELECH

Where is Shalom?

When R' Shabtai Yudelevitz would say a drasha on Parashat Bechukotai, he would begin with a humorous anecdote. There were once two friends, Shalom and Yisrael. They were taking a walk together and came to a river without a bridge. They wanted to get across. It was not very deep. They could easily walk across.

Shalom said, "Why should we both get wet? One of us should carry the other one across and that way, at least one can stay dry."

"O.K.," agreed Yisrael, "but who should carry whom?"

"Well," answered Shalom, "you ought to carry me, like the pasuk says – Shalom al Yisrael!"

So Yisrael put Shalom on his shoulders and carried him across.

When he got to the other side, Yisrael put Shalom down on the ground.

"Why did you put me down?" asked Shalom. "I was enjoying myself up there."

"Sorry," answered Yisrael, "ride over. Anyways, I wanted to fulfill the pasuk – venatati Shalom ba'aretz."

A Prerequisite for Torah

Parashat Bechukotai is read between Pesach and Shavuot. Its message of "Venatati shalom ba'aretz" is most apropos to Kabbalat HaTorah.

Hashem wanted to give Torah to Yisrael just after they left Mitzrayim. But at first, they were quarrelling with each other about this and about that. They came to Har Sinai and suddenly were at peace with each other. They camped as one.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, "Torah is all about peace. To whom shall I give it? To a nation which loves peace!" (Yalkut Shemoni Mishlei 934)

Gift of Peace

"If you follow in My statutes... I shall place peace in the land..."

Rashi comments: Even after giving you food and drink, without peace, it is worthless... peace is equivalent to everything, as the verse says (Yeshaya 45), "He makes peace and [thereby] creates everything." [The pasuk actually says "oseh shalom uvorei ra" – Hashem makes peace and creates evil. Rashi here is quoting the way that we say it in *tefillat Shacharit*, based upon Gm. Berachot 11b.]

Ibn Ezra explains this verse, "And I will establish peace in the land" to mean that there will be peace amongst you – internal peace in Klal



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

Yisroel. Ramban expounds: When Klal Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel follow the Torah and keep the mitzvot, animals will not attack people. Animals were not given permission to attack people until after Adam sinned.

Ohr HaChayim also concurs that the peace which is mentioned in this *pasuk* refers to unity and brotherhood within Klal Yisroel.

Four Peaces

There are four types of peace which we wish to achieve: a) Peace within one's home b) Peace within the religious community c) Peace within all of Klal Yisrael d) Peace between Jews and other nations.

How should we go about achieving peace? Which type should we work on first?

It seems reasonable to suggest that we should concentrate on achieving peace in the aforementioned order. First work on peace at home, then in the observant community and then amongst all Yidden. It is not for us to actively work on achieving world peace. If we work on internal peace, Hashem will help us be at peace with "others".

Rabbi Meir the Peace-maker

The Chid"ra warns us that Friday is a day when we must be extra careful not to get angry.

Shabbat is approaching and so much must get done. Sometimes there is tension in the home.

Rabbi Chaim Pilagi observed that in homes in which strife occurred on Fridays, some unfortunate occurrence would befall their occupants in the following week.

In one such home, the Satan got the better of them, week after week. Rabbi Meir decided to put an end to this. He headed out and made it his business to visit that home in the most pressured hours. Well, with the great Sage present, they learned to control their tempers. After three such weekly visits, the two had gained full control and Rabbi Meir heard Satan say that he would try his luck elsewhere. (Gittin 52a)

In another story, there was a righteous woman, we'll call her Mrs. S. Mrs. S. would attend Rabbi Meir's weekly Friday night derashah, after the meal. One week, the derashah was a bit lengthier than usual and her husband was upset at her late return home. He refused to open the door: He told her, "Do not come home until you spit in the darshen's eye!"

Rabbi Meir was informed of the husband's reaction via ruach hakodesh. He immediately feigned illness and requested that a woman be brought to him, one who knows how to treat eye ailments.



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

Mrs. S.'s friends encouraged her to give a try.

"Here's your chance," they said.

So she went to R' Meir, who asked her, "Do you know how to heal eyes?"

"No," she answered nervously.

"Well, it's quite simple," Rabbi Meir reassured.

"Just spit into my eye seven times." The woman bravely did so, and R' Meir told her, "Go tell your husband: You told me to spit one time; I spat seven times!"

R' Meir's talmidim asked, "How can rebbi degrade himself so much?"

R' Meir responded, "Well, Hashem allows His Great Name to be erased in order to re-establish peace between husband and wife. So I can compromise on my honor as well, for this noble cause."

If HE Likes You, So Will They

Chid"ra states that a person's *shalom bayit* reflects his religious behavior. He quotes the verse (Tehillim 38:4): There is no peace in my bones due to my sins. We are told in Parashat Bereishit that the very first woman was created from a bone of the first man. She then became his wife. Thus, the "bone" in this verse as well could refer to a wife. The Psalmist is lamenting his lack of friendship with his wife and attributing it to his failings in mitzvah observance.

This is a lesson for one and all, a red light alert which is not to be ignored. If we perceive a lack of tranquility in the home, we ought to review our general mitzvah observance. Certainly we can start with paying attention to how we have been treating our spouse. But even if that specific area seems to pass inspection, we must realize that failing to follow the Torah's rules in all areas of life can also be a direct catalyst to strife in the home.

Chovot HaLevavot also implies (in Shaar Yichud Hama'aseh, chapter 5) that "peace in the home is directly dependent upon one's fulfillment of Torah and mitzvot." He quotes a *chacham* who told his son: My son, you can't go out and make everyone happy. It's an impossible task, so just do your utmost to make Hashem pleased with you. Automatically, people will be pleased with you as well. Hashem can plant love and admiration in people's hearts, and praise upon their lips.

Why Did He Die

The Arizal was a relatively young man when he received a message from Heaven that he was wanted there. He gathered his students together and told them about the message and added that for as long as the *talmidim* live together in harmony, their rebbi will remain in their midst.

Well, everything went fine for about five months. Then, one Erev Shabbat, a disagreement arose



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



4

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

between two wives of *talmidim* and it led to a quarrel and eventually a feud between the families. This chain of events erupted quite rapidly, and that very Friday, after the evening services, the Arizal's complexion had taken a terrible change for the worse. He told his star pupil, Reb Chaim Vital that he had been informed that his time had come. The *machloket* which had erupted had sealed his verdict.

Reb Chaim Vital went from shul to shul to arouse the congregants to heartfelt prayers for the Arizal's recovery, but to no avail. The Arizal's parting message to his *talmidim* was to always respect each other and work on maintaining peace.

Greatest Gift of All

A wealthy man gathered his children together when he felt that his end was near. He told them, "I have a great gift for you."

They all gathered around him, eager to lay their eyes upon this precious gift.

The father said, "I want you all to live together in peace and harmony after my passing."

The children were confused. Where is the great gift, they wondered.

Seeing their puzzled faces, the father continued, "You should know that all of the wealth in the world is worthless without peace. Without peace,

you have nothing. It follows that peace is the greatest gift of all."

The Biala Rebbe would say that when a parent passes on and his children quarrel, the deceased has no rest, sorry to say.

In Pursuit of Peace

David Hamelech advises us to pursue peace (Tehillim 34). Hillel teaches that Aharon HaKohen would pursue peace (Avot 1).

Ketav Sofer has an interesting take on that. Being that the term "rodef" is usually used in reference to pursuing that which you wish to do away with, Ketav Sofer explains as follows. While we are to seek to achieve peace amongst the righteous, we should attempt to uproot peace from being the lot of the wicked. When the wicked assemble and plan to do evil, we should make it our business to get them upset at each other so that their evil plans will never reach fruition!

One such example is Rabbi Zion Levi. A certain young man in his community, from a wealthy and prestigious family, decided to marry a non-Jewess. Rabbi Levi tried to discourage it, but his words fell upon deaf ears.

Finally, on the wedding day, R' Levi came up with a plan. He called the chattan and asked him to come to the Rabbi's office immediately, as he



From the desk of
MORDECHAI MALKA
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel
Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions
Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

had a most valuable gift to bestow upon him, and he had to give it before the wedding.

The curious chattan came to the Rabbi's office. Rabbi Levi smiled and began chatting and then abruptly asked to borrow the young man's cell phone. The chattan acquiesced and the Rabbi walked out of his office, locking the door behind him.

Well, the Rabbi left him there all day. The young chattan waited a bit and then understood that he was trapped, and with no means of communication. All of his pounding on the door was to no avail.

Late that night, Rabbi Levi returned and released his hostage, who quickly made his way to the wedding hall. When the bride's side saw him, they cursed him and his people and he ran home in shame.

The next day, the non-chattan was about to attack the Rabbi. The Rabbi explained himself, "Believe me, I gave you the greatest gift anyone possibly could have given you! I saved your soul and kept you as part of the Chosen Nation. One day you'll thank me!"

And he did! He became more interested in authentic Judaism and ended up marrying a nice Jewish girl.

There's Something Better Than Steak

We see that peace is so important, on all fronts. Shlomo Hamelech teaches (Mishlei 15:17): Better a meager meal of vegetables in a loving atmosphere than dining upon fattened oxen with hatred there. And again (ibid. 17:1): Better dry bread and tranquility than a house full of meat and discord.

Anyone who thinks that they can achieve peace and harmony while trampling upon Torah and *mitzvot* is making a big mistake. Our *parashah* teaches us clearly that it takes *Im Bechukotai teleichu* to get to *Venatati Shalom ba'aretz*.

We cannot point fingers at others. We must work first on ourselves. If we improve our act, others will be impressed and follow suit. Let us try hard to do what Hashem wants of us and then all of those who ridicule us and taunt us will turn into our staunch supporters! Hashem searched far and wide for a container for all our blessings and the only suitable candidate was Peace.

May Hashem bless His Nation with peace and spread His Tabernacle of Peace upon us, speedily in our days. Amein

Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka